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Tracking the Mission and Identity Question: Three Decades of Inquiry and Three Models of Interpretation

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The Jesuits demonstrate the value and the power of a clearly stated, continually repeated, and consistently reinforced mission.[1]

Reading this comment by a biblical scholar who writes from outside Catholic higher education, in a recent book of essays about religion and the university, one can imagine contemporary Jesuits and many of their colleagues responding with a sigh, "Would that it were so!"

The conversation about the mission and identity of Jesuit colleges and universities is more than thirty years old and shows no sign of reaching terminal clarity soon. This essay proposes to offer an overview of the topic. It first describes the context in which the issue arose, which may not be familiar to many of the participants in the current conversation. Understanding this context may help make sense of why and how the debate developed the way it did. Then, we will briefly survey the kinds of programs and activities that developed on Jesuit campuses in

[1] W. Ward Gasque, "What We Can Learn About Higher Education from the Jesuits," in *Should God Get Tenure?: Essays on Religion and Higher Education*, ed. David W. Gill (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), p. 181. To be fair to Gasque, he is looking more at the history of Jesuit education than at present issues, stressing the continuity of vision from the *Spiritual Exercises*, the *Constitutions* of the Society, and the early versions of the *Ratio Studiorum* into Jesuit schools of the 19th and 20th centuries.

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response to the felt urgency of the issues. We will suggest three models that may explain the underlying dynamics of the identity question, and end by describing the challenges that remain at the center of the current discussion.

1 Context

• Like so many cultural shock waves of the postwar era, the beginning of the public debate about the distinctive characteristics of Jesuit education can be tied to one year in the tumultuous decade of the sixties. In 1967 two notable things happened. Notre Dame (not, of course, a Jesuit institution but certainly the best known Catholic university in the country) and St. Louis University created predominantly lay boards of trustees, and their sponsoring religious communities separated themselves legally and financially from the educational institutions they had founded. That autumn a group of prominent Catholic educators gathered at Land O'Lakes, Wisconsin, and produced a document that asserted that Catholic universities were universities first of all and "must have a true autonomy and academic freedom" in the face of any authority external to the university.[2]

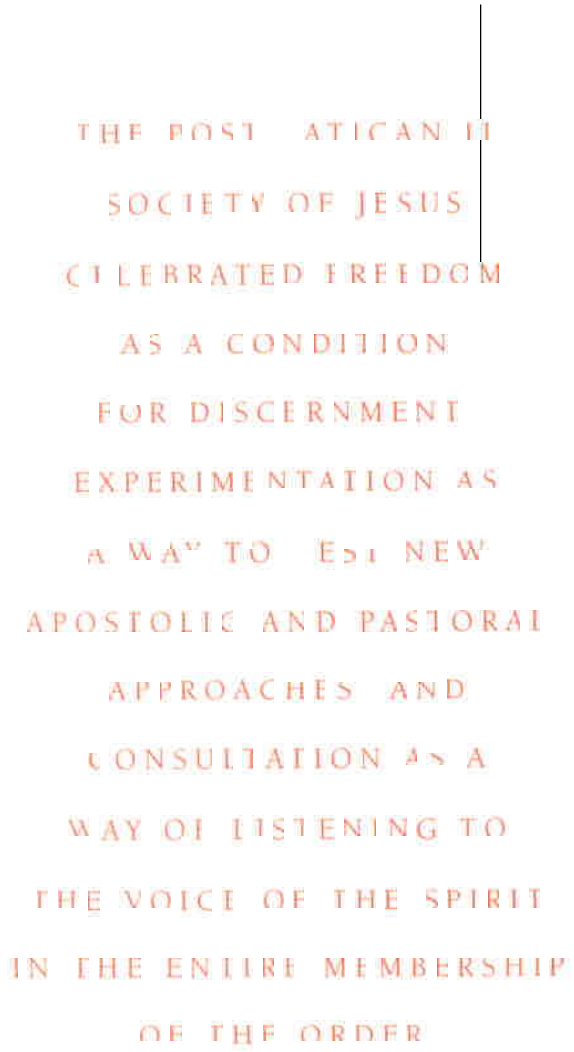
The ringing rhetoric of the Wisconsin statement did not have the immediate impact that independent boards of trustees did. Very shortly, all the Jesuit colleges and universities and many other Catholic institutions created variations on the same form of governance. The symbolism of these moves was enormous and its connotations set off discussions on every campus. Jesuit administrative leadership had been highly centralized and decisions at the time were made very much from the top down. Here was a dramatic initiative for which there had been little preparation of public opinion. There were good reasons for the move: concern about the legal consequences of control by religious bodies in the face of state and federal aid issues; eagerness to tap the expertise of lay supporters for the management of the universities; desire to be independent of the often-cautious oversight of distant religious superiors; and even theological conviction, in the spirit of Vatican II, that lay men and women should be partners in this ministry. But the implications of the move extended far beyond these motives. It is safe to say that the consequences of independent lay boards and the separation of institutional governance from the founding religious communities are still being digested.

• Larger forces that changed Jesuit campuses can also be dated to the sixties. Most American colleges and universities had grown in size and complexity in the fifties and were scarcely comfortable with their new identities when the culture at large exploded. Rock and roll, social psychology, and the drug culture seemed to promise endlessly new possibilities of identity and community. Youth was their vehicle, authority the enemy. "Don't trust anyone over thirty" was a memorable slogan of the day. One of the most-read educational journals was called simply *Change*. Protests against the Vietnam War and the successes of the civil rights movement empowered campus activists. Curricular requirements were dismantled. Experiment became the norm. Jesuit institutions were no exception. On most campuses a highly structured curriculum organized around extensive philosophy and theology courses disappeared overnight. Distinctive behaviors—dress codes, strict separation of men and women in residence halls, required attendance at Mass—were abandoned.

• The Second Vatican Council (1962-65) was the Catholic Church's own experience of sixties upheaval, though it had deeper roots in the unease that had accumulated during a century of reluctant accommodation to modernity. Pope John XXIII said that he wanted to open the church's windows onto contemporary culture. The council put the liturgy into the vernacular; adopted the revolutionary idea that the Catholic church has no exclusive claim on truth; embraced ecumenism, religious freedom, and the primacy of conscience; and described the church as a pilgrim people sharing the experience of sin and hope with all men and women. The result was a burst of excitement and creative energy in the church, and especially in fields like theology and religious education, but also a sense of change that was rapid and destabilizing.

• Vatican II coincided with the election of the first Catholic as American president, an apt symbol of how effectively Catholics had been assimilated into American culture. It became a sign of success if Catholic high schools (Jesuit schools included) could send their best graduates to the Ivy League and other prestigious universities. It became increasingly difficult to distinguish attitudes of Catholics from those of Americans generally: they attended church services, dabbled in New Age spirituality, got divorces, and disapproved of abortion but accepted the idea that it should be a free choice, at about the same rates as other Americans. One consequence of these changes has been that Catholics who come to study, teach, and work at Catholic universities often

[2] Alice Gallin, O.S.U., ed., *Amerian Catholic Higher Education: Essential Documents, 1967-1990* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), 7-12.



have very little filled-in understanding of their faith such as they might have had four decades ago. Many faculty and staff members have had little experience of religiously oriented education and they are often critical of what they have had. The net result is that it is far less clear how to draw on an agreed Catholic identity or to rely on the assumption that this will be shared by any number of one's students or colleagues. Frequently Catholicism, which in the past had defined and symbolized the unity within a Jesuit university or college, has become a point of polarity and debate.

- The social disruptions of the sixties and the changes instigated by Vatican II caused, occasioned, or at any rate coincided with an exodus of priests and religious from active ministry, a sharp decline in new vocations, and a shift among those who remained from older institutional work to new forms of directly social and personal ministries. In colleges and universities this meant a shrinking presence of male and female religious on the faculties and in the administrations of colleges and universities that had been founded by their congregations and a corresponding laicizing of authority at every level, from student-affairs personnel to faculty and administration.

- Ambitious Catholic universities adopted the model of the top secular universities, emphasizing specialized credentials, professionalized administration, and in the case of faculty, steadily intensified evaluation in terms of research and scholarly productivity. Positively, this meant that Catholic universities achieved a high degree of prestige and success among their peers in the eighties and nineties. Negatively, it meant that faculty and staff hiring responded more to candidates' professional accomplishments than to their familiarity with and interest in Catholic education, and that faculty members were more likely to think of themselves as members of a national profession than as citizens of a university community. The faculty became much more diverse than the administration, staff, or students. Moreover, then as now, faculty professional ethos was very different from that of administration and staff; the latter tended to support institutional identity as a matter of course, whereas the former put a high priority on academic freedom, self-governance, and a faculty role in making academic policy-values not every Catholic institution was used to endorsing. The credentializing of the university also meant that students' out-of-class lives were segmented from their academic development and assigned to student-life professionals. Increasingly, it became harder to see what distinguished a

Catholic or Jesuit university from its religiously disengaged competitors in the ratings game.

• Finally, three developments in Jesuit life in the sixties and seventies prompted widespread rethinking of what it meant to be a Jesuit college or university. Vatican II, by its decree on the appropriate renewal of religious congregations, prompted Jesuits to return to the sources of their spirituality: the integral Spiritual Exercises made under a director and adapted to the individual situation of the retreatant, individual and communal apostolic discernment, the centrality of mission in Ignatian spirituality, and the emphasis on mobility and versatility in the work Jesuits undertook. In 1814, the post-Suppression Society had emerged in an ecclesial world that was suspicious of freedom, innovation, and democracy. The post-Vatican II Society celebrated freedom as a condition for discernment, experimentation as a way to test new apostolic and pastoral approaches, and consultation as a way of listening to the voice of the Spirit in the entire membership of the order. This spiritual quickening led to fresh perspectives in the way Jesuits taught theology, engaged students and lay colleagues in the mission of the schools, and embraced the culture of the modern world as the realistic locale for the preaching of the gospel.

The second development emerged out of the 32nd General Congregation of the Society (1974-1975). Under the leadership of the superior general Pedro Arrupe, the Society had looked long and hard at the experiences of the Church in Africa, Latin and Central America, and Asia and at the appalling economic and social inequality of the rich and poor in these countries. It also considered the national inequalities between the countries of the industrial West and the emerging new nations. There was a pervasive need to confront the practical atheism that left God outside the market place and confined religion to the sanctuary. This resolve found expression in Decree Four of that congregation, proposing that the Society's mission in the last quarter of the twentieth century is to promote "the faith that does justice." It proved to be a controversial step, especially among some involved in education. It took the better part of two decades for Jesuit universities to assimilate the significance of this orientation.

A third development emerged from the example established by the Jesuit high schools in the U.S. Spurred by a 1973 speech of Pedro Arrupe to Jesuit graduates from around the world, in which he said that the goal of Jesuit education is to form "men for others," the high-school leadership realized far sooner than their counterparts in higher education that everyone had to be renewed and retrained to produce students who would meet this standard. High schools offered workshops and training programs for faculty, staff, and board members. These efforts were integrated by two principles: Ignatian apostolic spirituality and a commitment to a faith that works for a just world. As a consequence of these concerted efforts, the universities and colleges were confronted by high-school graduates who expected to meet a similar intensity of Ignatian purpose and apostolic dedication in the universities and colleges they had applied to and entered precisely because they bore the name Jesuit.

2 Responses on the Campuses

When all these developments converged in the late sixties, their potential for disrupting Jesuit campuses and for calling into question the educational and religious certainties of the fifties was enormous. What happened in response?

Jesuit Community Initiatives

The sense of imperiled identity showed up first among Jesuits, in various shades of confusion and conflict—between Jesuits at work in the university and Jesuits at home in their communities, between those leading the changes and those resisting mightily, between men with different kinds of academic preparation and different views of the significance of Vatican II, between older and younger men. "Project One," a national effort to encourage Jesuit university communities to articulate their sense of identity and mission, disclosed instead the deep cracks and fault lines in Jesuits' morale and in their understanding of their work.

In the face of these shifts and uncertainties, groups of Jesuits looked for venues in which they could talk with one another about their work and their Jesuit lives. Intense, grass-roots discussion groups sprang up, some of which continued over several years. Out of these groups came many of the initiatives that later contributed substantially to productive change on campuses.

These conversations turned, tentatively, to lay colleagues. Jesuit communities began to invite faculty and administrative staff members to share hospitality and conversation about the issues. The format was often lunch or dinner and a presentation by a Jesuit about some aspect of Jesuit history or spirituality, followed by questions, answers, and socializing.

On some campuses this evolved into more extended weekend discussions, where personal histories and attitudes could be explored in some depth. At Boston College, for example, some 400 people participated in the

Cohasset Weekends from 1982 to 1993 (and intermittently since then), at the Jesuit Community's oceanside retreat house, where they talked fairly frankly about their experiences, positive and negative, of working at an institution that identified itself as Catholic and Jesuit. This model was repeated elsewhere, e.g. the Grailville weekends at Xavier University.

Jesuit communities also published statements about Jesuit education, Ignatian spirituality, and the history of Jesuits at their institutions. These documents contributed to raising consciousness among faculty, staff, and students about the kind of institution they were part of, but they were at least as valuable for the Jesuits who produced them, as evidence that they could clarify, however tentatively, their own sense of organizational identity in fast-changing times.

Networking

From the late eighties onward there were some surprisingly successful forms of regional networking and expanded attempts to communicate the spirit of Jesuit education and Ignatian spirituality. There was one large, national effort, *Assembly 89*, which brought together several hundred men and women from all the U.S. Jesuit colleges and universities, at Georgetown, on the 200th anniversary of the founding of the preparatory school there. The meeting was a considerable success and sent participants away energized about issues on their own campuses. It stimulated the formation of regional networks, notably the Western Conversations (a twice-yearly meeting of faculty from Jesuit universities in the West) and the Heartland meetings of representatives from the Midwestern institutions (a more inclusive membership of faculty, staff, administrators, trustees, and province officials).

A notable contribution to developing the sense of belonging to a national network of Jesuit institutions was the appearance in 1991 of this journal, *Conversations About Jesuit Higher Education*. It has been a vehicle for thoughtful discussion of topics that are central to Jesuit education or are currently hot on Jesuit campuses: hiring for mission, service learning, the core curriculum, women in Jesuit universities, the consequences of embracing ideas of social justice and religious diversity in a Jesuit university, etc.

The Georgetown Assembly of 1989 was not repeated on a national scale as a collective project of Jesuit colleges and universities, but in 1999 St. Joseph's University organized a similar conference in Philadelphia, on the future of Jesuit higher education. The meeting was planned on a smaller scale, but so great was the interest on Jesuit campuses that eventually several hundred men and women from around the country and across the world met for four days of papers, panels, and discussion. In 1999-2000, regional meetings and another national meeting (at Santa Clara in October 2000) are being conducted on the teaching of justice in U.S. Jesuit universities. Though such meetings take time and resources to organize, clearly there is an appetite for conversation about the topics they focus on.

The 1999 St. Joseph's meeting has resulted in a volume of significant essays about Jesuit education.[3] Throughout the period we are considering, a number of important books about Jesuit, Catholic, and religiously-oriented higher education have appeared, testifying to the wide interest in the topic.[4]

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[3] Martin R. Tripole, S.J., ed., *Jesuit Education 21 : Conference Proceedings on the Future of Jesuit Higher Education* (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's University Press, 2000).

[4] A selection of the most important titles would include: Michael J. Buckley, S.J., *The Catholic University as Promise and Project: Reflections in a Jesuit Idiom* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1998); James T. Burtchaell, C.S.C., *The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of Colleges and Universities from their Christian Churches* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); Paul FitzGerald, S.J., *The Governance of Jesuit Colleges and Universities in the United States, 1920-1970* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984); Alice Gallin, O.S.U., *Independence and a New Partnership in Catholic Education* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996); Gallin, *Negotiating Identity: Catholic Higher Education Since 1960* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000); Philip Gleason, *Contending With Modernity: Catholic Higher Education in the Twentiety Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); George Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C., ed., *The Challenge and Promise of A Catholic University* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994); David J. O'Brien, *From the Heart of the American Church: Catholic Higher Education and American Culture* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994); Mark R. Schwehn, *Exiles From Eden: Religion and the Academic Vocation in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Martin R. Tripole, S.J., *Promise Renewed: Jesuit Higher Education for a New Millenium* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1999).

Explicit Institutional Strategies for Change

Slowly, the impact of these conversations began to be felt. Institutional administrations undertook initiatives of their own to establish programs that foregrounded values which seemed to be central to their institutional self-understanding.

Most typical was the emphasis on social justice. In varied ways this had long been a Jesuit specialty, exemplified in labor-union schools and centers of social analysis (such as existed in New Orleans and St. Louis); but in the wake of GC 32 programs emphasizing the connection of faith and justice became distinctive on Jesuit campuses. Some of these were academic courses. More numerous were volunteer service programs and immersion experiences—in urban neighborhoods around campuses, in Appalachia, or in the countries of Latin America and even further abroad. At their best these programs involved students not only in service but in a reflective learning that changed their understanding of the issues and of their own motivations.[5]

A later response to the identity question on many campuses was the establishment of Catholic Studies programs, which enable students to explore the richness of the Catholic intellectual and cultural tradition and often open up new areas in which faculty can exercise their scholarly specialties.[6]

At some point in the late eighties or early nineties, the perception of the issues slowly shifted. In varying degrees, institutions began to realize that the steps they had so far taken, important and useful as they were in influencing individual students, faculty members, and administrators, did not reach far enough into the fabric of the institutional culture. They began to develop explicit strategies for institutional change.

One such structure is the center or institute that can act as a intellectual culture within an institution. Among the first of these to come into existence was Boston College's Jesuit Institute. Established in 1989, the institute engages faculty members in two- or three-year seminars about issues at the intersection of religious faith and contemporary culture. Recent topics have included creation and science, the AIDS crisis, feminism and Catholicism, authority in the church, and religion and the arts. It also brings to campus annually two or three research fellows and sponsors lectures and conferences on current cultural and religious issues. This model has been adopted with variations on other campuses (Loyola Chicago's Center for Faith and Culture, Santa Clara's Bannon Institute, Fordham's Archbishop Hughes Institute, Holy Cross's Center for Religion, Ethics, and Culture) and is similar to numerous more specifically focused institutes in Jesuit universities which explore the religious dimensions of particular intellectual issues. James Burtchaell skeptically characterizes these institutes as "strategic hamlets," implying that Jesuits and like-minded colleagues have withdrawn to these redoubts, having given up the effort to have a more pervasive influence on their institutions.[7] Those who know these structures from close up might be more optimistic. At the very least, the verdict is still out on their ultimate influence.

The orientation and ongoing development of faculty and administrative staff constitute another large area in which institutions are making investments of time and money to influence institutional culture. Programs vary in scope and length. Many campuses have produced effective booklets that introduce people to their histories and to the history of Jesuit education and its distinctive themes. A popular resource is *Shared Vision*, the series of three videos developed by St. Louis University and its Institute of Jesuit Sources, on Jesuit history and Jesuit education, across the world and in the U.S. A vexed question is the timing of these programs. For example, when employees are newly arrived and overwhelmed with practical aspects of adjustment, how much mission and identity information would be better left until later? Would a more appropriate and effective time for integrating faculty into the mission of the school be at the time of tenure? For reasons like these St. Louis University, in its Ricci Seminars, offers senior faculty reduced teaching loads to participate in a semester-long conversation about the sources of Jesuit history, Ignatian spirituality, and the key themes of Jesuit education.

Another explicit type of structure to facilitate change has been the appointment on most campuses of individuals specifically designated to oversee or develop programs that support the distinctively Jesuit or Catholic aspects of institutional mission. The evolution of these

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[5] Cf. the issue of *Conversations* dedicated to "Service Learning" and especially the seminal article by Patrick Byrne, "Paradigms of Justice and Love," *Conversations* 7 (Spring, 1995), pp. 5-17.

[6] Thomas M. Landy, "Catholic Studies at Catholic Colleges and Universities," *America* 178:1 (January 3, 1998), 12-15.

[7] Burtchaell, *Dying of the Light*, 620.

positions is itself an indicator of the growing importance of the issue of identity and mission in the consciousness of institutional administrators. In 1988 Creighton University organized a gathering of men and women involved in mission-focused activities on their own campuses. Two years later, after the Georgetown assembly, they met again to share ideas about issues and strategies and practical information about their budgets, resources, authority, etc. At first this was essentially a grass-roots organization of interested individuals, but gradually institutions formalized their representation as they began to designate people for this role on their campuses. Xavier University was the first Jesuit institution to name a vice president for mission. St. Louis University, Boston College, and Gonzaga University have since done the same. Other institutions have a Special Assistant to the President. Still others designate the Director of Campus Ministry or the Rector of the Jesuit Community to play this role. The role varies from campus to campus, depending on the degree of authority the person has in the governance structure of the institution and, realistically, on the support of the president. In 1993 the group took the name "Coordinators of Mission and Identity", when it became a recognized conference of the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities. Interestingly, other Catholic colleges and universities, with no association with Jesuits, have asked with increasing frequency to attend the CMI meetings, as a way of tapping into resources they can use in their own efforts to clarify their identities and support their missions. They are also appointing people with similar titles to oversee such efforts.

Whether an institution really needs someone specifically appointed (and given significant authority and resources) to coordinate mission activity is the topic of some ongoing debate. Santa Clara has chosen an approach that defines one end of the spectrum of opinion: the university sends a faculty representative to the annual meetings, but gives him no authority or responsibility within the institution. The Santa Clara view is that mission and identity is the responsibility of everyone, especially of the key administrators. A good example of the opposite approach would be Xavier University. Initiatives begun by the Jesuit Community in the eighties (new-faculty orientation, weekends of conversation, lectures) were taken over by the university in the early nineties when a Jesuit was appointed Vice President for Spiritual Development. He oversees campus ministry, a variety of activities under the name Ignatian Programs, and the office of Peace and Justice Programs. Conceptually, there is much to be said for the view that an institution has a healthy sense of identity when responsibility for it 1) is built into decision-making structures, 2) is widely shared, and 3) is not assigned to one or two people in a separate office. However, the reality of organizational behavior would seem to make it unlikely—especially in a large institution—that structures will change unless someone has the authority, a place at the table, and the resources to sponsor the initiatives that will result in raised consciousness and changed structures.

Another form of institutional strategy to facilitate change occurs at the level of boards of trustees. Some boards have standing committees that oversee mission-oriented efforts in the institution and regularly report to their fellow trustees about these. This can be a useful way of educating trustees, who are apt to come from worlds where these issues are relatively remote. While all institutions provide some kind of orientation to mission issues for new trustees, it is our impression that few do this well. Presidents and board chairs might even want to provide opportunities for the spiritual development of their trustees, especially to make the Spiritual Exercises.

Potentially, the most ambitious attempt to change attitudes on Jesuit campuses is the kind of center or institute whose aim is to situate Ignatian spirituality squarely in the middle of the institutional culture. In the seventies and eighties individual Jesuits and Jesuit communities offered the Spiritual Exercises to non-Jesuit colleagues, especially in the form that allowed people to participate in the midst of their ordinary professional commitments (the so-called 19th-Annotation Retreats or retreats-in-everyday-life). Some institutions, such as Scranton and St. Joseph's, briefly had formal programs that sought to make the Exercises available to faculty and staff. On most campuses similar opportunities continue to be available. A more ambitious step, however, has been the establishment of the kind of center whose goal is to offer the resources of Ignatian spirituality not just to individuals for their personal religious development but to academic departments and administrative programs—e.g. the development office, human resources, the career center, student affairs, counseling, residence-hall administration, athletics, etc.—to help them reflect on their work in light of the institutional mission. These centers (they exist now at Boston College and Loyola Marymount University) also propose to play a role in educating the lay men and women who will inevitably assume more and more of the responsibility for the future mission of Jesuit universities.

In the evolution of these responses, various trajectories are more or less visible, e.g.:

- from talk to action
- from off-campus retreats to on-campus agendas
- from Jesuit Community initiatives to official administrative strategies
- from staff emphasis to faculty emphasis
- from focusing on pragmatic solutions for institutional issues to focusing on the spiritual development of the people responsible for finding the solutions
- from an intra-institutional perspective to networks and a cross-institutional perspective.

And, perhaps most important, from thinking that Jesuits will have to be the fuel for all of these initiatives to realizing that it will largely be lay colleagues who will take responsibility for the Catholic and even the Jesuit identity of these institutions in the future.

3. A Tentative Explanation: Three Models

If we try to discern an explanatory pattern in the past thirty years of conversation about Jesuit higher education and in the initiatives undertaken to clarify and support its distinctive character, we can identify three stages. We present them here more as a hunch than a closely argued thesis.

In somewhat simplistic terms, we might say that the growth of Jesuit colleges and universities after World War II took place in an ethos that could be termed the **Control Model** of education. This model located decisions about governance, policy, curriculum, and student formation in the official representatives of the sponsoring Jesuit province. The college or university president was also the religious superior of the Jesuits, appointed by the superior general of the order in Rome. The deans and other principal administrators were all Jesuits, appointed by the provincial superior. Questions about institutional identity or about topics like student formation simply didn't arise; it was assumed that Jesuits, collectively, took responsibility for such matters. Lay faculty and administrators came from the same institutional culture as the Jesuits and were used to its top-down decision making.

This model of governance was congenial to the pre-Vatican II church. It produced alumni who were sure of what the church taught, confident of their ethical priorities, and suspicious of the plurality inherent in the world in which they would practice their professions, make their homes, and raise their families. It was an education that celebrated having the right theological and philo-

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sophical answers, exercising sexual restraint, and ambitioning a prosperous career in a postwar U.S.

Somewhere in the sixties and enduring into the eighties the model changed. Bright Catholic high-school students chose eminent secular universities for their education. Catholic colleges and universities began looking to their secular counterparts as they chose to enter the mainstream of U.S. education. Departments looked for the best and the brightest faculty members that they could recruit, not at their religious affiliation or their commitment to the mission of the school as Catholic and Jesuit. Professors concentrated more on research and publication than on teaching and student religious and ethical formation. Universities and even smaller colleges became professionally segmented into areas headed by vice presidents-academic affairs, student services, human resources, finance, development, and so forth. We could say that a **Professional Model** of education replaced the earlier Control Model.

The Catholic character remained central to the enterprise, but its inculcation moved from the president's office to campus ministry (which also became an area where professional credentials counted). The explicit mission was academic excellence and professional prestige because, after all, God could and should be found in all things.

The Professional Model of organizing the Jesuit university was paralleled by something of a **Permissive Model** of conceptualizing the role of the university in student formation. Curricular requirements were reduced. Some institutions abandoned any trace of a core curriculum. The principle of free choice reigned. Faculty advising narrowed to a strictly academic focus. All decisions about how to spend one's life were potentially good ones. Regulation of student behavior was often attenuated to the point where it amounted to little more than observing civil law. The idea that the university should act *in loco parentis* seemed a quaint holdover from a more innocent age.

Voices began to be raised, however, asking where was the distinctiveness in a Catholic and Jesuit education? Professional expertise and academic excellence and personal freedom were undoubtedly good things, but the most Ignatian of questions began to be asked about them: "Good for what?"

In the nineties a new model began to emerge in answer to that question. This model finds inspiration in the Ignatian foundations for education, in the versatility and creativity of early Jesuit educators, and in the social

IF WE TRY TO DISCERN AN EXPLANATORY PATTERN IN THE PAST THIRTY YEARS OF CONVERSATION ABOUT JESUIT HIGHER EDUCATION AND IN THE INITIATIVES UNDERTAKEN TO CLARIFY AND SUPPORT ITS DISTINCTIVE CHARACTER WE CAN IDENTIFY THREE STAGES

commitment that can grow out of professional competency and dedication. It is a model that refuses to return to the Control Model of imposition. But it also wants to abandon the supremacy of the professional model that relegates all discussions of faith and meaning, of justice and service, of vocation and discernment to the marginal activity of campus retreats or to service programs. It asks the fundamental question: how do faith and learning mutually challenge and enrich each other? It is a model in process, something being developed. It cares about the heart of education as wisdom but honors the craft of research and publication. Some say that it wants the best of both worlds—academic excellence and ethical and religious reflection. It does. It is a model that sees the Jesuit/Ignatian character of the college and university as a purchase on being Catholic—and Jewish and Muslim and Buddhist and agnostic. It does this because it trusts honest dialogue and reverent conversation as the coin of the realm of the intellect and the key to the house of wisdom. We might call this a **Mission Model** of education.

This sequence of models may reflect the larger context of change in higher education in the U.S.[8] Perceptions, over the last fifty years, of what a college education offers and what the economic culture demands seem to have gone through similar shifts. Students who in the fifties expected to become "organization men" (surely a control model) and learned, in the eighties, to think of themselves as professionals with portable, equal-opportunity skills, may now be saying: skills, yes, but also creativity and the kind of critical thinking that will make us successful entrepreneurs. In the nineties, loyalty is not to an organization or to a professional guild but is self-directed. Another way of saying this is that there has been a shift in what it means to be a "whole person."

Interestingly, the evolution in computing also parallels these three models. The first computers were big brains taking up whole floors of buildings, with anxious attendants caring for and feeling these centralized authorities. Then, we had the revolution of the personal computer, in which educated professionals could tap directly into the central authority of the server (i.e. "get wired") and then move on with authority of their own. (Consider the ecclesial parallel of women—and lay men—earning PhDs in theology during this period.) Now we are into the wireless age, the age of the Internet, in which the idea of information as a stable body is being redefined, and in which being hardwired to the central authority is limiting, not freeing. New software (e.g. Napster) allows users to communicate directly from computer to computer, bypassing servers altogether. In this milieu, professional credentials and authority are much more pragmatic than foundational, the ability to navigate more important than the contents of the cargo.

Looked at this way, the three models we are proposing have not been generated by Jesuit education or unique to it; they are pragmatic institutional adaptations to paradigm shifts in the wider culture. This point suggests a useful warning. IBM almost self-destructed when it thought it was in the office-machine business, but it reinvented itself when it realized it was in the information business. Jesuit colleges and universities are in the education business, but we are also conveyors of a certain kind of experiential wisdom and formation. A conception of Jesuit education that can make a compelling case for the particular genius of the Catholic and Jesuit approach for our time will have several charactersistics. It will be one that can argue that the formative process of this model of education produces not just knowledge, skills, and cultural savvy but also a depth of reflection, maturity, and spiritual character that marks the way its graduates approach the world. This would be a conception of Jesuit education that could enhance and focus the mission of all Jesuit colleges and universities.

4. Current Issues

If this Mission Model accurately describes the present situation of Jesuit colleges and universities, then several challenges would seem to be at the center of the current discussion. Posed as questions, some of these challenges are:

- **How can we integrate head and heart in students' education, the formal curriculum with the hidden one that focuses on identity formation, affectivity, relationships, ethical commitments, and vocational discernment?** Today, students are like patients in a medical center, parceled out among specialists. The big disconnect is between the classroom and the rest of students' lives. We have created a parallel curriculum in which students can address this split (cornerstone and capstone programs, leadership programs, internships, retreats, service programs that have a heavy dimension of life-changing reflection, etc.), thus reinforcing the very split we want to heal. Do we want to accept this dichotomy? Or do we want to admit that we have two

[8] We are indebted to Prof. Nancy A. Dallavalle, of Fairfield University, for this insight and for the computer analogy.

missions, an academic one and a formative one, and find ways of enabling students to integrate the two, to connect intellectual commitment with spiritual maturation and a sense of how they can use their talents in satisfying work that makes a difference in the world?

- **How can we introduce a discussion of the university's mission into the hiring process?** For faculty this process is usually department-based and, typically, the single criterion is professional competence as this is defined by the disciplinary guild nationally. Deans may have a veto but, in our experience, this is a rarely used and blunt weapon. The issue is no less acute with student-life administrators, who may have as little experience as faculty do of education that values ethical and religious reflection as well as academic excellence. What kind of process would enable deans, faculty and administrators to move from a purely professional model to include a mission model of hiring?
- **How is a Jesuit university related to the institutional Catholic Church?** The question makes many people nervous. Most of us are more comfortable talking about Jesuit education rather than Catholic education (cf. David J. O'Brien's thoughtful article in *Conversations*)[9]. Students routinely say they are "spiritual but not religious." Formal church affiliation is problematic for many. Not a few older faculty and staff describe themselves as "recovering Catholics." In some Jesuit institutions fewer than half the undergraduates are Catholic. The papal document on American Catholic higher education, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, has forced the issue into the open. The document asserts the autonomy of the Catholic university but appears to envision mainly a Control Model of the relationship between institutional church and university. Is there a place in the Mission Model for a healthy relationship of the two? Can both institutions support and challenge each other in productive ways? Can the hierarchical church live with, and even support, the evolving and not-yet-fully-determinate quality of Catholic universities?
- **How do we conceptualize and describe the role of Jews, Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists in a Jesuit university? Or, for that matter, of agnostics and atheists?** Well-intentioned language is often a problem here. People are sensitive to being described as "welcome." If you have been a faculty member for 25 years, who is "welcoming" you and why? The implication that some are empowered to welcome sits uneasily with those who are welcomed. Francis X. Clooney, S.J., in a recent issue of *Conversations*, has written on this topic in helpful ways ("Jesuit colleges and universities should promote religious diversity and dialogue in an authentically religious way"[10]) but we are a long way from being able to do this gracefully and habitually. One approach to the complex of issues arising from the diversity of belief in the university community could be to find ways of translating the apparently monolithic idea of Jesuit/Catholic identity and mission into categories that widen the conversation by making it more attractive and intelligible to larger groups of colleagues. Social justice is a clear example of a topic about which large numbers of faculty and staff share commitments. Other areas around which colleagues of quite different belief traditions might be invited into a productive conversation include ethics, student formation, teaching and research as vocations, and diversity of religious experience itself.
- **As more men and women in Jesuit institutions indicate a willingness to take responsibility for developing the Ignatian aspects of the institutional mission, how can time and resources be organized to help them do this?** Once, they would have grown up in a religious culture that understood Jesuit education implicitly. Now we are asking them to take on a form of intellectual and spiritual development, in addition to their own academic and professional development. Moreover, we are asking them to take something that has normally been privatized and bring it into the public forum; they may have to struggle with their colleagues to make their views credible and practical. Have we begun to think about what's involved in developing this new kind of university citizen?
- **How can institutions share resources in this area of mission and identity?** Jesuit colleges and universities cooperate in some remarkable ways (for example, the joint MBA program and the new AJCU distance-learning initiative, not to mention all the official and unofficial networks sponsored by AJCU), but in other respects (faculty and staff recruiting, especially of Jesuits) they often compete. Will the larger and better endowed institutions be able to develop institutes, cen-

[9] "Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education: Jesuit Si, Catholic...Not So Sure," *Conversations* 6 (Fall, 1994), pp. 4-12.

[10] Francis X. Clooney, S.J., "Goddess in the Classroom: Is the Promotion of Religious Diversity a Dangerous Idea?," *Conversations*, 16 (Fall, 1999), p. 31.

ters, and programs that successfully address mission and identity issues, leaving the smaller ones to do what they can with limited resources? Can we find ways of sharing our successes with one another? Generosity need not be one-directional. Some of the smaller institutions may have already clearly identified what they want to do and found ways of integrating the Professional Model and the Mission Model that could be instructive to the larger universities. The point is that we should be more conscious of how we can collaborate and more generous in following this up.

- **Whose criteria are we going to use to evaluate ourselves?** The stakes are high. If the Professional Model prevails, we will have one set of ideas about the kind of students we admit, the advice we give younger faculty members about how to spend their time, and the way we think about residence-hall life. Will trustees set priorities entirely according to *US News and World Report* rankings—in some ways the apotheosis of the Professional Model? Or can we imagine having the confidence to embrace the excellence implied by these rankings but also to define our own niche in the panoply of higher education and to evaluate our successes according to a model in which faith and learning persist in honest dialogue and reverent conversation?
- **Finally, can we work out a language that enables us to deal with the complex reality of our experience in this area?** Writing this essay, we have struggled with the word "identity," long used to describe the central issue, even interchangeably with "mission." We have discovered that for many identity is a problematic term. They would say its connotations are static, essentialist, even coercive. It implies a distinction between those who share the identity and those who don't. Or it implies a false ideal of unity, one that either blurs desirable differences or tries to include so many views that its meaning gets watered down to plain vanilla versions of identity—for example, tolerance of diversity. From this point of view mission is a more flexible and useful term. A mission can be assessed and evaluated, whereas claims about identity provoke arguments. Emphasizing mission enables people to choose among a variety of ways of contributing to the mission. It better captures the evolutionary style of Jesuit education. And it is familiar academic language, at least in the U.S.

For others, mission is the less appealing term. It suggests a set of goals imposed by a few or by those in authority. Identity, on the other hand, is created by all the people in the institution. The term validates diversity. It says that nothing is being imposed on you, that you can take advantage of the resources the institution offers, that not every university has to be the same and that it's quite reasonable for an institution to have a distinct identity. It says that it is easier to find common places to work than to find common places to believe.

Clearly, the terms are equally problematic. Perhaps the truth behind these nuances of perception is that both terms are objectionable when they suggest a totalizing and exclusionary concept of mission or identity and that both are acceptable when they suggest that there are multiple ways of contributing to the mission and multiple forms of identity that can embody the spirit of Jesuit education. If so, we might go so far as to call this a postmodern version of the original inspiration of Jesuit education. Nothing is clearer, from the history of Jesuit educational practice, than that it was endlessly adaptive to time and place and the needs of those who sought it.

We began by noting that the current discussion is a good thirty years old. In fact, it seems to be as old as Jesuit education itself, which would mean that it has lasted four and a half centuries. And, if we see it in continuity with the lively debate among the ancients, which the Renaissance revived, about the relationship between scientific and moral education, it can be traced back to Athens and the arguments between the philosophers and the sophists. We may be able to pause here, survey the scene, and draw some useful conclusions about our own predicaments but, in keeping with the flexible and adaptive style of Jesuit education, there seems little likelihood that the discussion will end soon.